

UNION and PEACE

Recommended ;

I N A

S E R M O N

Preach'd to Several

CONGREGATIONS Assembled

together *April 17. 1704.*

By *John Piggott.* K

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L O N D O N,

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Rom. XIV. 19.

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for Peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

THE Province assign'd me at this time, I have not undertaken without some concern of mind; yet I would hope there is so much Charity in this Assembly, that Truth, from whomsoever it comes, will not be despis'd. 'Tis not the Business of a Faction, but the Cause of God in our hands, that I shall attempt to promote. My Design is not to stir up Strife, but to diffuse the grateful Odours of Charity, and to recommend Union and a good Correspondence to the Churches of Jesus Christ.

The Imperfections of humane Nature since the Fall are so great, and the Prejudices bred by a different Education so many, that 'tis not probable we should concur exactly in all the same Opinions; yet 'tis highly reasonable that Christians should have Charity for each other, and that *they should love as*

A Discourse concerning

Brethren, especially since the things where in we all agree are infinitely greater, and of higher importance than those wherein we differ. And now why should we not agree to differ, without either Enmity or Scorn? For certainly for one Christian to censure and condemn another merely because he cannot agree with him in small or indifferent things, is as unreasonable as for one Man to quarrel with the rest of the World, because they have not his Features and Complexion.

The Apostle *Paul* being well aware of the ill Consequences that await so uncharitable a Spirit, attempts to correct it (in this Chapter of which my Text is a part) by those Arguments that are just and moving; that if possible he might prevail with the Jewish and Gentile Converts, tho' of different Apprehensions in lesser matters, to exercise mutual Charity and Forbearance towards each other, so as to continue in the same Communion. And one Consideration he urges to persuade to this, is, That how much soever these Christians differ'd in their Opinions about the eating of such Meats and the observation of such Days as were themselves indifferent, since both of them aim'd at the Divine Glory; such Differences should make no breach in their Communion, nor should they so far indulge the

Passion

Ver. 6, 7, 8.

Passions, as to *despise* and *judg* one another. Ver. 3.
 For, says the Apostle, *we shall all stand be-* 10.
fore the Judgment-Seat of Christ: And eve- 12.
ry one of us shall give an account of himself
to God. Q. D. 'tis highly unreasonable
 that we should assume the Power of cen-
 suring and judging each other, since we
 must all stand upon the same level before
 the awful Tribunal of the Son of God.
 May the thoughts of the last and great Assize
 put a stop to those Censures you too freely
 vent one against another. *Let us not there-* Ver. 13.
fore judg one another any more; but judg
his rather, that no man put a stumbling-
block, or occasion to fall in his brothers way.
 Q. D. instead of uttering uncharitable Cen-
 sures one of another, let us rather keep
 this Rule in view, *viz.* That we industri-
 ously avoid the giving any Scandal or Of-
 fence. Let those that understand the com-
 pass of their Christian Liberty, not un-
 reasonably use it to disquiet and scandalize
 the Weak; and let the weak in the Faith,
 that labour under Jewish Prejudices, be
 careful that they don't pronounce any rash
 Censures on the Gentile Converts, who
 have a clearer view of the Liberty indulg'd
 by the *Christian Institution*. In the 14th
 Verse the Apostle intimates that every
 Christian must act agreeably to the Per-
 suasion of his Mind, and the Dictates of
 his

- Ver. 14. his Conscience. *I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus Christ, that there is no thing unclean of it self; but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.* Q. D. If a Man shall believe there is a difference in certain Meats, that some of them are unclean and ought not to be eaten, it would be a Sin for such a one to partake of those Meats, because he acts against his own Persuasion and Conscience, and tho his Conscience be erroneous in that Matter, yet acting against it, he discovers daring Presumption in venturing to do that which he apprehends to be a Sin against God. The Apostle in the two following Verses, persuades to mutual Charity and Forbearance, from the ill Consequences that might ensue by the exercise of the contrary Temper. He then assures
- Ver. 17. 'em, *That the Kingdom of God is not Meats and Drink, but Righteousness and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.* Q. D. Surely you are unacquainted with the Design of Christianity, or else you have forgotten where in *true and undefil'd Religion* doth consist, that you should with so much warmth engage in matters of an indifferent nature. Alas! the *Essence of Religion* consists in *Righteousness and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.* For he that in these things serves Christ, is acceptable to God, and approv'd of
- Ver. 18. Men.

men. As for these indifferent Matters, is not your eating or not eating, your observing or not observing of those days, but that in Righteousness, Peace and Joy the Holy Ghost, serveth Christ, whether Jewish or a Gentile Christian, whether so much entangled with unnecessary Scruples, or more advanced in his Knowledge with respect to his Christian Liberty, *he is accepted of God, and approved of Men.* from all which the Apostle infers, as in the words of the Text; *Let us therefore follow after the things which make for Peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for Peace, *i. e.* the Peace of the Church; and those things wherewith one may edify another, *i. e.* by improving one another in Knowledge, Grace, and Comfort. 'Tis the former part of the words I shall principally insist on, tho I shall not wholly omit to glance on the latter. And for the more profitable managing of my Discourse upon this Text, it shall be under these four general Heads.

First, I shall state the Notion of that Peace we are exhorted to pursue.

Secondly, Show you how reasonable it is to follow such a Peace.

Thirdly, Instance in some of those things, which

A Discourse concerning

which if regularly pursu'd, will make
for the Peace of the Churches of Je-
sus Christ.

Fourthly, I shall make the Use and Im-
provement of the whole.

First, I am to state the Notion of the
Peace and Union we are exhorted by the
Apostle to pursue: For tho Peace be a very
desirable thing, yet we are not to pursue
at all adventures; we ought indeed to pur-
sue it to the utmost to obtain and
preserve Unity and Concord, yet never to
purchase it at the expence of *Holiness, Truth*
and *Order*. Therefore,

1. The Union and Peace that by the
Text we are exhorted to pursue, must be
in conjunction with Holiness. Real Holiness
is necessary to make us easy upon
Earth, and happy in Heaven: wherever Sin
reigns, it will occasion stinging remorse
and create confusion in mens Souls. So
that whatever Methods are taken for the
obtaining of Peace, that are not consistent
with Righteousness, they'l be so far from
promoting Union and a good Correspondence
among Christians, that they'l cause
us to be at discord with our selves, and
will continually disquiet our own Minds.
Let us therefore attend to the Advice of
the Apostle; *Follow Peace with all men*

Heb. 12.
14.

and Holiness, without which no man shall see
 the Lord: i. e. no one without Holiness
 can enjoy God, either in his Ordinances up-
 on Earth, or by being rais'd to the beatific
 vision in Heaven. The reason is very ob-
 vious; there is so great a Contrariety be-
 tween the unsanctified Faculties of wicked
 Men, and the purified Objects of the
 visible State, that 'tis impossible in the
 very nature of the thing, that there
 should be any real Pleasure and Happi-
 ness, where there is so great a disagree-
 ment betwixt the Faculty and the Object.
 And whatever Soul is thus disorder'd, it
 could not be happy were it fix'd in the
 midst of Paradise it self. What signifies a
 consort of Musick to one that is deaf? or
 heaps of Gold to one scorcht with the
 flames of a Fever? Thus equally disagree-
 able would be the Society and Employ of
 the Blessed to an unholy Man; and equally
 unsuccessful will be all Methods to procure
 peace in prejudice to Holiness.

Holiness is one of the distinguishing
 marks of the Gospel; for there never was
 any Institution in the World, whether Hu-
 man or Divine, that did so strictly require
 the Holiness of Heart and Life, as the Gospel
 of the Blessed God, which obliges us to
 flee from the very shadow of Vice. What
 shall I say of Holiness! 'Tis the moral

B

Glory

Glory of the Deity, and there is nothing that does so much improve and ennoble a human or angelical Spirit. Therefore my Brethren, let us always take care that Holiness be at the bottom of our Union; or else it will be no better than a Confederacy with Sin; like what the Prophet complains of, *They shall gather together, but not by me; i. e. not with my Approbation and Blessing.* And such a kind of Union as that, is fitly enough resembled by the Image mention'd in *Daniel*, whose feet were partly Iron, and partly Clay, which soon fell to pieces, being compos'd of such disagreeable Materials: and the same end sooner or later will attend all sinful Confederacies.

2. The Peace we are to pursue must be in conjunction with Truth. *We can* (says the Apostle) *do nothing against the Truth.* He could go as far as any Man to procure and promote Peace, but never in prejudice to Holiness and Truth. And I observe that the same Apostle, in his excellent description of *Charity*, says, *That it rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth.* By *Truth* here I understand the Gospel, or the Christian Faith, agreeable to that of the Apostle *John*; *I rejoiced greatly to find the Children walking in the Truth, i. e. in the Faith and Fellowship of the Gospel.* Now

by Truth in the former we understand the same as we do in the latter Text, *viz.* the pure unsophisticated Doctrine of Christianity, then the Apostle plainly intimates, that *Charity it self* will not allow us to associate and unite with those whose Doctrines sap the Foundation of the Christian Religion. *Charity* cannot rejoice in *Iniquity or Falshood*, but it rejoiceth *alone in the Truth*.

But here I would not be misunderstood. Christians may differ in their Notions and Opinions about those Matters that are *less* clearly reveal'd, or that are *indifferent* in their own nature. Yet this may be without dividing in our Affections, or making any breach in our Christian Community. Why should our different Apprehensions in lesser Matters, abate our mutual respects? since God loves a sincere Christian, so he be weak, and knows not the extent of his Liberty. And if he receives such a one, why should not those that are strong in the Faith receive him also, and exercise that Love and Charity towards him which is due to all the Members of Christ's mystical Body?

Indeed as formerly there was no fixing Babel and the Ark together, so can there not be any agreement now between the Temple of God and Idols. Whatever

* 2 Kings

17. 33.

comp. with

Ezra 4. 1,

2, 3.

Eph. 4. 5.

1 Cor. 14.

33.

Principle in Religion strikes at the Foundation, it forbids our Union with those that patronize it; for so far as we unite with such, we countenance Error and betray the Truth. 'Tis remarkable, that the * Jews in Ezra's time would not associate with the Samaritans, because (tho they pretended to *fear the Lord*) they took the unreasonable liberty of *serving their own Gods*. 'Tis equally unreasonable and criminal for those who adhere to the *Doctrine according to Godliness*, to coalesce with those that are corrupted with *damnable Heresies*, that deny the Lord that bought 'em, and that teach for *Doctrines the Commandments of men*. I grant that our Charity ought not to be confined to a Party which concurs exactly with us in all things; yet the Limits fix'd by the Apostle should bound us with respect to our Communion, where People acknowledge *One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism*.

3. That Peace and Union we are to pursue, must be consistent with Order and Distinction. The Peace which the Apostle recommends to the Children of God is not design'd to destroy the Government he has fix'd in his Church: For God is *not the Author of Confusion, but of Peace, in all the Churches of the Saints*. In the Churches of Christ some have greater and some lesser Gifts; some have larger and

other

others smaller measures of Grace: which Variety truly subserves the Interest of the whole, as does the just distinction of Publick Officers and Private Members. Now the Union and Peace which the Text recommends, is not intended to destroy this Distinction and Order. There is an admirable Union in the natural Body, where the Eye is serviceable to the Ear, the Ear to the Eye, the Hand to the Foot, the Foot to the Hand, without invading each others Offices. Care indeed ought to be taken, that the *Privileges of the Church* may be secured, and yet that the *Power of the Pastor* be not infring'd; and when 'tis thus, they mutually strengthen and assist each other. 'Tis the Work of an Elder, not only to *feed* but to *govern*. And agreeably hereunto the Author to the *Hebrews* gives direction to the *governed* concerning their deportment and behaviour: *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit your selves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.* The Government which an Evangelical Pastor is to exercise, must not be despotick and arbitrary, but the Church must be govern'd with her own consent: 'Tis not a stately Domination, or imperious Sway, but a ruling

Heb. 13.
17.

ruling by meek Persuasion, agreeable to
 the Rules exhibited in Divine Revelation.
 What tho ordain'd Ministers are call'd
 2 Cor. 1. *Bishops* or *Overseers* in the New Testament
 24. yet they are not to *lord* it over the People
 Faith, but to act as *helpers* of their Joy
 And in what sacred Society soever there is
 a strict regard had to the Order and Dis-
 tinction Christ hath fix'd in it, there will
 be mutual Indearments betwixt the Officers
 and private Members, which will lay a
 Foundation for a lasting Union. But
 where the Order of Christ is inverted, and
 the Distinction he has made betwixt Offi-
 cers and People confounded, and both
 brought upon the same Level, such lie ex-
 pos'd to all the Miseries of Anarchy, for
 People then will act as did the Children of
Israel when without a King: Every Man
 did that which was right in his own Eyes.

I proceed now to the *second* general
 Head, which is, to shew you how reason-
 able 'tis to pursue such a Union and Peace
 as I have stated.

1. It will appear to be highly reason-
 able that we pursue Union and Peace, if we
 consider what Authority has enjoin'd it.
 And that is no less than His who is King of
 Kings, and Lord of Lords. Now where
 the Word of a King is, the wise Man says
 then

there is Power. And how great Authority
 commands the Command of him that is
 head of all Principalities and Powers, who
 living always in the Bosom of the Fa-
 ther, must necessarily be acquainted with
 his Will. Observe with what Majesty he
 speaks; *This is my Commandment, that you* John 15.
love one another, as I have loved you. At 12.
 the 17th Verse also, *These things I command*
you, that you love one another. Again, *A* John 13.
new Commandment give I unto you, that you 34.
love one another. This Commandment is
 absolutely new; for we find, that to
love our Neighbour as our selves, was en-
 join'd under the Mosaick Oeconomy, and
 was indeed a main Precept of the Law of
 nature. Yet this Command may be said
 to be new, as 'tis enlarg'd both with re-
 spect to the Object, we being oblig'd to
 love all Men, even our very Enemies; and
 in regard of the intenseness thereof, for the
 expressions of our Love must run higher,
 being requir'd on some occasions to lay
 down our Lives for the Brethren. Final-
 ly, this Command is not only inculcated
 with greater frequency than formerly; but
 rest upon us from the bright Example of
 our Blessed Saviour, which is certainly a
 new Motive affix'd to this Precept, for
 which no doubt among other things 'tis
 call'd a new Commandment.

Now

Now surely 'tis the most reasonable thing in the World that we should obey the Son of God, and submit to his Authority, who has not only made us, but redeem'd us; not only purchas'd us with his Blood, but renew'd us by his Spirit, if we are real Christians. And if the Authority of Him who has a right in us by Nature, by Purchase, by Conquest, and by Contract, will not fasten this Precept on our Consciences, I know not what will; especially considering that the time he gave this in charge, was when he was just ready to take his leave of his Disciples and drew near to the last Scene of his Sufferings and Sorrows; so that this Command may be look'd on as a part of his last Will and Testament, and what he pronounc'd as 'twere with his dying Breath. Now as we generally take the strictest notice of the words of a *dying Friend*, how much more should we be mov'd by the words of a *dying Saviour*, one who when he came into this World brought Peace with him, and when he went out of it left Peace behind him!

It has been often remark'd, that our Saviour chose to be born in the most quiet and peaceful State of the Roman Empire when *Augustus*, in token of an Universal Peace, had shut up the Mystical Gates of

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* The Ro
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born in th

his Temple *. And we are inform'd by Divine Revelation, that the Heavenly Choir that sung at our Saviour's Nativity, join'd their melodious Voices to the soft strains of Divine Love, and warbled out *Peace on Earth, and good Will towards Men.* And the Blessed Jesus himself a little before his *exit* bequeaths Peace as his Legacy to his Disciples: *Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you.* Tho this Peace may principally refer to the great Gospel-blessing of Reconciliation with God; yet there is no doubt but it comprehends also the Peace we have been treating of.

But some may be ready to say, How is this consistent with what our Saviour affirms elsewhere, when he declares, *He was not come to send Peace on Earth, but a sword?*

I answer, We are not to understand it as he spoke of the natural tendency of the Doctrines of his Holy Religion, but of the accidental Event of 'em thro the malice and perverseness of Men. Therefore it is observable, that in the whole of our

* The Romans were the most warlike People in the World; that in seven Centuries that had elaps'd before the Incarnation of our Saviour, they enjoy'd no more than two years Peace, which makes it the more remarkable that our Saviour should be born in the time of a Universal Peace.

Saviour's Conduct he did discountenance every thing that had the appearance of Nature and Revenge, and recommended the practice of that Religion which is *pure and peaceable*: A Religion that raised the exercises of *Love* to the highest pitch. It cannot be denied but that in the Books that were written by the Philosophers of *Greece and Rome*, there are some excellent Rules of Morality. Yet the best of the Heathen Moralists did frequently affirm That † *Revenge was sweeter than Life* itself, and did not only allow but recommend the practice of it, affirming, *that not to revenge a Wrong, is an Argument of Fear and Sloth, of an unmanly and ungenerous Mind*: which is directly opposite, as any thing can be, to the Genius and Spirit of Christianity; for no Institution of Life did ever recommend Peace and Charity with so peculiar a force of Expression and such a vehemence of Style, as the Christian Revelation does. Let us therefore attend to what is requir'd by the Head and Founder of our Religion: But I *unto you, Love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully*

Mat. 5. 44.

† Aristotle and Cicero.

and persecute you. Now since we are bound by the Authority of the Son of God to love all men, even our very Enemies, how much stronger is the Obligation upon us to love all Christians, and to follow those things that make for Peace, with all those that are nearly allied to the Prince of Peace?

2. The reasonableness of following the things that make for Peace, will farther appear, if we consider what Examples there are in Scripture to enforce such an Exhortation. Altho the Commands of an Incarnate God carry with 'em an Authority to a man's Conscience, yet when reduc'd to practice as in the Example of good Men, they show that the Dutys enjoyn'd are not only reasonable, but practicable. The Command enlightens the Understanding, 'tis Example that attracts the Will and affections. The Authority of Christ in Precept awes the Conscience, but an agreeable Example quickens the motion of the Soul, and promotes an intire conformity. Now to engage us in the pursuit of Peace, we have the Examples of the best Men in every Age of the Church. *Nehemiah* had so great a regard to the Union and Peace of the Church, that he could not be easy with all the Pleasures of the Persian Court, while *Jerusalem* was desolate,

late, and her Walls broken down ; but he
 Nehem. 1. *sat down and wept, and mourned certain days*
 3, 4. *and fasted and prayed before the God of Hea-*
ven.

Nothing lay nearer the heart of the Di-
 vine Psalmist, than the Good of the
 Church, as appears by those warm and
 moving Expressions : *If I forget thee,*
 Psal. 137. *Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cur-*
 5, 6. *ning. If I do not remember thee, let my*
tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth ; if I
prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. And

in another Psalm, *Pray for the peace of Je-*
 Psal. 122. *rusalem ; they shall prosper that love thee.*
 6, 7, 8. *Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity with-*
in thy palaces. For my brethren and compa-
nions sakes, I will now say, Peace be with-
thee. And in the New Testament what
 bright Example was the Apostle Paul, and
 how frequently did he inculcate Charity in
 his Discourses, and recommend it in his

Life. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the
 1 Cor. 1. *name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you*
 10. *all speak the same thing, and that there be no*
division among you ; and that you be perfectly
join'd together in the same mind, and in the
same judgment. And how forcible
 are those Expressions of the same Apostle

to the Philippians ; *If there be therefore any*
 Phil. 2. 1, 2. *consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love,*
if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels

and mercies ; fulfil ye my joy, that you be
like minded, having the same love, being of
one accord, of one mind. And elsewhere
says this Apostle of the Gentiles ; If any
man have a mind to be contentious, we have
no such custom, nor the Churches of God.
Now what this excellent Person had incul-
cated in his Discourses, he did admirably
exemplify in his Life ; denying himself in
things that were lawful, that he might not
scandalize the weak ; and tho free from
all men, yet he made himself a *Servant* to
all, that he might win the more, and main-
tain the *Unity of the Spirit in the bond of*
peace.

But let us turn our Eyes from the Ser-
vant, to the brighter Example of his Lord.
The Servant indeed did shine with the lu-
men of a Star, but the Example of his and
our Lord with a brightness like the Sun,
that Globe of Fire that heats as well as
enlightens the World ; Christ's Example is
proper to direct and persuade, to guide and
move the Soul. *Walk in love, as Christ* Eph. 5. 2.
 hath loved us : And see that ye love one ano- John 13.
ther, as I have loved you. Here's the most 34.
perfect Example plac'd in our view, and
recommended to our imitation ; 'tis the
Example of Him who is *Love it self,* 1 John.
who was unwearied in doing good, even
for those that censur'd his Goodness, and
abus'd

abus'd his Kindness, fastening upon him Names of Reproach, in return for his Benefits: yet none of these things did discourage his Progress, for he constantly render'd Good for Evil; and show'd a great deal more kindness to his inveterate Enemies, than others do to their best Friends; *For when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* O how did he bear the contradiction of Sinners against himself, and when revil'd open'd not his mouth, unless to instruct them or pray for 'em; and that he did even in the midst of his Agony! *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* If Christ had so much love for his Enemies, surely it becomes us who pretend to be his Disciples, to love one another *with pure hearts fervently.* Did our Lord while on Earth recommend Union among his Friends and Followers by his Example as well as his Command? surely 'tis highly reasonable that we who claim an Alliance with this Prince of Peace, should with a flaming but regular Zeal, *follow the things that make for Peace.* And this leads to the

3d Reason, which shall be drawn from the *strict Relation* there is betwixt all those that are the Children of God. *All men naturally are of Kin, and Friends to each other,* says an antient Philosopher. And

a more excellent Person than he assures us that God *hath made of one Blood all Nations of men to dwell on all the face of the Earth.* There is (as a great Man observes) an essential *Relation* as well as *Likeness* between one man and another, which nothing can ever dissolve, because 'tis founded in that which no man can divest himself of in *humane Nature*. By this we are brought under an obligation to love all mankind. Now our being brought into a nearer and nobler Relation, does not lessen but very much increase our Obligation to love one another. All the Children of God are justified by the same Righteousness. *The Righteousness of Christ is unto all, and upon all that believe, and there is no difference.* And so for Sanctification, all true Christians are purified and influenced by the same Spirit: And consequently the Relation between one Christian and another must be more intimate and near, than what is barely between one Man and another, tho allied by Affinity or Blood. My own Brother according to the Flesh, is near of kin to me, tho the Soul that animates his Body is distinct from mine; but if I am a true Believer, and adopted into the Family of Heaven, I am influenced by the same Spirit as are all the Household of Faith. Some Philosophers have

Rom. 8. 9.

have argued in favour of an *Universal Intellect*, supposing that there was a general Soul which did actuate the whole frame of Nature. But waving any Dispute about that Principle, this we are assured of by Divine Revelation, viz. That all who are under the Bonds of the Everlasting Covenant, are animated by one and the same Spirit: For if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And the Apostle, speaking of Christ's being Head of the Church, says, *From whom the whole Body fitly joyn'd together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh encrease of the Body unto the edifying it self in love.* Now if any Persons in the World have reason to pursue the things that make for Peace, certainly we have, who profess to be under the influence of the same kind and good Spirit. If we are to follow Peace with all Men because Brethren in a large sense, as descending from the same Original, how much more should we endeavour after it with those that have a nearer, higher, and nobler alliance to us, who profess the same Religion, are Children of the same Father, Members of the same mystical Body, Temples of the same Holy Spirit, retain'd to the Service of the same Master, Subject

of the same Prince, influenced by the same Hope, carrying on the same great Ends and Designs, under the encouragement of the same Promises, and as being Heirs of the same Kingdom and Glory : I say, how reasonable is it, that we that are under so many sacred and endearing Ties, should live in Peace, and follow the things that may most promote it?

4. The reasonableness of this Duty will further appear, if we consider the constant and unwearied endeavour of Satan and wicked Men to break the Peace of the Church. 'Tis hardly to be express'd what industry is us'd by the malignant Spirits of darkness, and the various Instruments under their influence, to break the Union and disturb the Peace of the Church : sometimes by promoting the discussion of unprofitable Questions, and the warm management of unnecessary Disputes ; at other times by raising and fomenting Jealousies among Christians one of another. Sometimes wicked men put on a Mask of religion, and so get into sacred Societies, with a purpose to sow discord among Brethren.

5. We ought to follow the things that make for Peace, because of the great advantages that will ensue thereupon.

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1. By

1. By pursuing of Unity and Concord, we shall gain a great deal of true and solid Pleasure. The first views we take of Charity in its exercise, and the tendency that generous Principles and Actions have towards Union and Peace, without any long reflection, are secretly approv'd by us, and occasion in us a real and rational Pleasure. We cannot but be satisfied and delighted with the Exercises of Charity, unless our Powers are greatly depriv'd and vitiated.

A Man that has a clear Eye or a good Ear, cannot but be pleas'd with Beauty and Harmony. Man was made for Society, and naturally abhors Solitude: Infinite Wisdom thought it not good for him to be alone, even in a state of Innocence. Paradise it self was render'd more pleasant by mutual Converse: and no doubt but it will be a part of the happiness of Heaven that we shall be favour'd with the agreeable Society of the Angels, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect; whose Love to God is always ardent, and whose united Endeavours to advance the Divine Glory will occasion a true and a lasting Pleasure to spring up in their Minds.

While we live in the exercise of Love which is the softest and sweetest of all the Passions, we free our selves from those

things

things that are unruly and troublesom, dis-
quieting and tormenting; our Minds are
calm and chearful, serene and pleasant; and
every reflection we make upon what is past
increases our Pleasure, so that this Duty
carries with it its own Reward.

I know 'tis commonly said, that Revenge
is sweet; but I am sure, that to a Man of
great and generous Soul, the exercises of
Charity will give a truer gust of real Plea-
sure. For there is no man that meditates
Revenge, but he has a thousand unquiet
agitations in his breast; and when he
begins to cool, and seriously consider,
he is angry with himself and asham'd of
his Folly: whereas there is *no torment in
Love*, as the Apostle observes, but it pro-
duces a real and a sublimated Pleasure. He
that follows the things that make for
Peace, has the testimony of a good Con-
science in favour of his Actions, as well as
the approbation of all wise and good
Men; but that which is more than all, he
has the favour of God, and shall have the
honour of being number'd with his Chil-
dren. *Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they* Mat. 5. 9.
shall be call'd the Children of God.

Union and Agreement (says one) is
the Soul of the Universe, the Ornament
of Heaven and Earth, the Life and Joy of
both Worlds. *Behold* (says the Psalmist) Psal. 133.

how good and how pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in Unity! If the Agreement of others gives us so charming a view, what an exalted Pleasure must they feel that are of one Heart and one Way! Indeed that Christian, whose natural temper is none of the best, will find the Exercises of Charity somewhat difficult at first: which an ingenious Modern does illustrate thus 'Tis (says he) like a Man that has some acquaintance with Geometry; if he does but just cast his eye upon a subtil Theorem, it seems perplext and difficult; but if he begins at the simple Principles, and so advances by degrees through the intermediate Propositions, he will with ease attain a Demonstration of it. So if a Christian follow the things that make for Peace, and is found in the exercise of those Graces that have a tendency to promote Union and a good Correspondence, he will lose his Prejudices by degrees which he had imbib'd against the possibility and practicableness of this Duty, and begin to have a relish of the most agreeable Pleasure.

2. Another Advantage that attends the practice of the Duty I am recommending is, that it will be for the security and defence of the Church. The blessed Jesus indeed is the *Rock* on which the Church is built, and the *Head* by which she is in

fluenc'd

uenc'd and govern'd: yet without detracting from the honour of our Lord we may say, that Union between her several Members is her subordinate Strength and safety. The Apostle, after he had recommended to the *Colossians* the practice of various important Dutys, adds, *And above all these things put on Charity, which is the * Bond of perfectness, or a perfect Bond. And let the Peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also you are called in one Body; and be ye thankful.* Q. d. Charity is the most excellent Grace in it self, and the most beneficial in its Exercises; it will not only be ornamental to your Profession of Christianity, but the Cement of the Church, and so will defend you against a great many Evils to which you would be otherwise expos'd.

All the Persecutions that have fallen on the Churches of Christ, have not weakened them half so much as the Divisions of their own Members. Where there is strife and Contention, Discord and Animosity in a Society, it soon loosens and weakens the Bands that hold it together. Now have the most flourishing Churches

* *Σύνδεσμος* signifies such as Bond as unites different things or Persons together, which makes it evident the Apostle speaking of that Charity we owe to one another.

as well as Kingdoms been destroy'd by their own Dissensions ! When *Jerusalem* was besieg'd by *Titus Vespasian*, all his battering Rams did not half so much mischief to the Jews, as the Divisions occasion'd among them by their fiery Zealots, who provok'd 'em to destroy one another. The rage and violence of Enemies cannot do so much injury to Sacred Societies as their own Members, when they give loose to their indecent Passions, which weaken their Hands, and divide their Strength, and have a direct tendency to dissolve and break them in pieces. And so much the Apostle intimates in that excellent Caution he gives the *Galatians*; *Be ye as one* (say he) *take heed ye be not consum'd one of another*. 'Tis Union, and a good Correspondence, that must make us stedfast and unmoveable ; for our Blessed Saviour hath assured us, that *a Kingdom divided against itself cannot stand*. Where all the Members of a Church are united as one Man, they are in an excellent posture of defence ; but when they are tossed about with every wind of Doctrine, and begin to promote Parties and Factions, they presently become an easie Prey to those that lie in wait to deceive.

A single Thred is soon snapt asunder ;
 as the wise Man observes, a *threefold* Eccl. 4.12.
cord is not quickly broken. 'Tis Union
 and Order that render men capable of
 making a vigorous defence, and that raise
 them above the fears of an Enemy, that
 are superior in Number, but strangers to
 discipline and Agreement. When a Church
 of Christ maintains the Unity of the Spi-
 rit in the Bond of Peace, she is not only
 fair as the Moon, and clear as the Sun, but
 terrible as an Army with Banners. How
 reasonable therefore is it that we pursue the
 things that make for Peace, that we
sacrifice all private Animosities and Dis-
sensions to the Publick Good, than which no-
 thing can more contribute to our lasting
 settlement, so as to render us firm and un-
 shaken as a Rock.

3. The pursuit of Peace and Union will
 commend our Holy Religion, and bring
 honour to Jesus the Head of it. 'Tis ve-
 remarkable, that when our Blessed Sa-
 vour had pray'd for the Union of his Peo-
 ple, He pleads this Argument with his Fa-
 ther; *Let them be one, that the World may* John 17.
believe that thou hast sent me. Again, *Let* 21.
them be perfect in one, that the World may Ver. 23.

Donare inimicitias Reip. was the Advice of the anti-
Romans for the security of their Civil State.

know

know that thou hast sent me. Now that which does any way prove or illustrate Christ coming forth from the Father, is proper to recommend Christianity to the World and the *Union of Christians* in the judgment of our Saviour is proper for this end. When we follow the things that make for Peace, we adorn that Holy Religion we profess, as well as evidence to the World that we belong to that Jesus who is the Prince of Peace: *By this* (says our Saviour) *shall all men know that you are my Disciples, if you love one another.* Love is the distinguishing Badg, the discriminating Mark of the true Disciple of Jesus. The Disciples of other Institutions among the Jews, as well as Heathens, used to distinguish themselves by some peculiar Opinion, or singular Habit, or slight Ceremony. But our Lord fixes on something that is most excellent in it self, and useful to others as the distinguishing Character of his Disciples, *viz. Love*, which, as one well expresses it, is the most *human*, and the most *divine* Quality of which we are capable.

Now what a reproach is it to Christianity, when such as call themselves the Disciples of the Prince of Peace, act like the Sons of Strife. There is not any thing that does more mischief in the world than
Division

division amongst Christians; for it keeps
 good Men out of the Church, and hardens
 wicked Men in their Sins. 'Tis storied of
Alexander Severus, that seeing two Chri-
 stians at variance one with the other, he
 forbid them any longer to assume the
 Name of Christians, because by their
 strife and Contention they dishonour'd
 their Lord and Master. Certainly were
 Christians but sensible what mischief they
 do Religion by their Discords, they would
 mourn over 'em, and vigorously pursue *the*
things that make for Peace. All our Dis-
 sensions about Religion will not so effectually
 recommend it, as our *walking in Love*.
 There are a thousand secret and powerful
 harms in Charity, that take fast hold of
 mens Hearts, and insensibly but effectually
 contract their Love and Esteem. Charity in
 Exercises, is like the *Ointment of the right*
and that cannot be hid; the Perfume will
 diffuse and spread it self in Conversation.
 4. Another Advantage that will ensue
 the due performance of the Duty I am
 commending, is the Encrease and Edifi-
 cation of the Church. The Primitive
 Churches were at Peace within themselves,
 when they had rest from the Persecution
 of their Enemies; and that was the happy
 season of their Edification and Growth.
They had the Churches rest throughout all
 E Judea,

Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the Fear of the Lord, and Comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. Those within the Sacred Inclosure were built up in their most holy Faith; and many of those that were without, beholding the good Agreement and Order of those within, were encourag'd to coalesce with 'em. Then it was that Convert
 Isa. 60. 8. flock'd to the House of God as Doves to their Windows; so vast an accession was there of Members to the Christian Church. And if we of this Age would have the Borders of Sion enlarg'd, and those within the Pale of the Church edified, we must follow the things that make for Peace.

What edification can be expected in that Society, which is made the very Seat of Contention? But where a Church is under the charming influence of a Spirit of Love, the Members will mutually perform for each other all good Offices; they sympathize with one another under their various Trials, rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with those that weep. They'll be ready to counsel and advise one another, and when there is occasion make use of friendly Reproof to each other. Moreover, that Charity which flames in their Breasts, will engage 'em to use the most courteous and obliging Deportment,

that they'll endeavour to overcome every thing that stands in the way of Peace, or that may abate the Exercises of Love. This excellent temper of Mind will in a great measure prevent both our giving and taking Offence; for we shall be ready to put the most candid Interpretation on one anothers Words and Actions; and when Offences come, Charity will dispose us to a mutual forgiveness, and engage us to pray one for another. Now all these things have a tendency to the edification of the Church, and prepare the way for it. In a word, if the Security and Defence, if the Glory and Honour, if the Increase and Edification of the Church, accompanied with a rational and real Pleasure, are Advantages that attend the Duty I have been recommending, then surely 'tis highly reasonable that we comply with the Advice of the Apostle in the Text, to *follow the things that make for Peace*. But,

Thirdly, I am to instance in some of those things that make for the Peace of the Churches of Jesus Christ. And in order to this we must carefully avoid whatever may stir up Strife and Discord. The Apostle James points out the Source and Spring of our Contentions. *From whence come Wars and Fightings among you? Come they not hence,*

hence, even of your Lusts that war in your Members? We must not indulge any Lust or disorderly Passion, if we would promote Peace in the Churches of the Saints. Whatever we do, let us avoid Pride, which is generally at the bottom of most of those Divisions that are amongst Christians. When there was a strife among the Disciples of our Lord, 'twas who should be the greatest. And the wise Man has told

Prov. 13. us, That *only by Pride cometh Contention*
 10. *i. e.* chiefly and principally this has one of the greatest hands in our Discords and Animosities, and is therefore to be suppressed and avoided. In short, let us lay aside all Envy and Malice, Covetousness and Revenge, inordinate self-Love, and evil Surmising, all which have a natural tendency to Strife and Confusion. Now to procure and perpetuate Peace and Union, there are these several things I would recommend to your serious consideration.

1. Let all that labour in the Word and Doctrine amongst us, endeavour after Union and a good Correspondence. If there be no good Understanding amongst the Ministers of Christ, no wonder if there be Factions among the People, as there were in the *Corinthian Church*: One was for *Paul*, another for *Apollos*, a third for *Cephas*. Now this the Apostle urges against

them as a sad but sure Sign of their Carnality; and if there was less of this sensual Spirit among Christians now, the Edification and Increase of the Church would be more remarkable. Therefore if we would obtain Peace, and walk in Love, one way to compass so desirable an End, is to cultivate an Acquaintance and good Understanding amongst the Ministers of Christ. 'Tis not likely there should be much Peace in the Churches, while the Interest of the Ministers is divided. If we look shy on one another, and keep at a distance with a forbidding Air, our People that are generally more influenced by Example than Precept, will rather be factious than follow the things that make for Peace. My Brethren, God has honour'd several of you by putting you into the Ministry: Will you suffer me to prevail on you to be of one heart, and one way, that we may serve the Lord with one consent, striving together as one Man for the Faith of the Gospel, continually provoking one another to Love and good Works?

2. Let both Ministers and People endeavour to live in the continual exercise of those Virtues that have a special tendency to Union and Concord. The higher our Attainments are in Grace, the more strict and intimate will be our Union. *Have Salt*

Mark 9.
50.

Salt in your selves (says our Saviour) *and have Peace one with another.* In which words our Lord seems to intimate, that so long as People retain a true savor of Divine things, and continue in the exercise of Grace, it will be a proper means to promote Union and Peace among Christians.

Phil. 2. 3.

Let us be much in the exercise of Humility and Meekness; for if *in lowliness of mind each would esteem others better than themselves* it would wonderfully promote Peace in a

Prov. 28.
25.

Christian Societies. 'Tis *he that is of proud heart that stirreth up Strife*; Strife the natural Offspring of Pride, but Peace the genuine Issue of Humility. So for the exercise of Patience and Self-denial, if we had but learn'd to bear and forbear, to deny our selves in things lawful rather than scandalize a weak Christian, then Peace that seems to be banish'd from some Societies, would return, revive and flourish. What is it that some People will not deny themselves under the influence of Ambition and Popularity! Some have parted with their Lives for the good of their Country, others for the sake of a Minion, and to prepare their way for impure Imbraces have wasted their Estates, prostituted their Honour, hazarded their Health, shipwrecked their Consciences, and forfeited their Salvation; and shall not a true principle of Ch

city

ity, agreeable to right Reason and divine Revelation, enforc'd with the strongest Motives, make us willing to deny our own Humours to promote the publick Good? What tho Christians of the same Society differ from us in things of an indifferent nature, yet they agree with us in Matters of the highest consequence. *Therefore whereunto we have already attain'd, let us walk by the same Rule, let us mind the same thing.*

3. Let us endeavour to give an early stop to those things that are likely to make a breach upon Unity and Order. This is agreeable to the Advice of the wise Man, who assures us that, *The beginning of Strife* Prov. 17: 14. *is as when one letteth out Water: Therefore* (says he) *leave off Contention before it be meddled with.* No sooner is the Bank of a River broken, but the Water will spread, and carry all before it with an irresistible violence. When Passions begin to rise, 'tis the best way immediately to suppress 'em, because no one can tell how far they shall be carried, nor into what Indecencies men may be transported by giving way to Wrath. 'Tis certainly the most prudent course to avoid the occasions of Strife, and very early to resist every thing that has any visible tendency towards it. How great Mischiefs, and what lamen-

lamentable Divisions have been occasioned by very small beginnings of Contention. The little Heterogeneous Vapours which the Sun exhales from the Earth, often descend in Tempest and Thunder; so small Differences heightned by Pride, fall in a mighty Storm, and spread Confusion and Disorder, where once nothing but Love and Peace reign'd. *How great a matter* (says the Apostle James) *does a little Fire kindle!* A few Sparks struck into a Magazine shall instantly blow up and tear all in pieces. A scornful Look, or an unhandsome Reflection, if not presently and prudently corrected, may lay a Foundation for innumerable Mischiefs. Therefore if we have any real regard to the Peace of the Church let us abstain from the very appearance of those things that tend to Dissension: *And above all things have fervent Charity among your selves; for Charity shall cover the multitude of Sins.*

Eph. 4. 8.

Mat. 10.
16.

4. Let us manage all our Religious Affairs with Wisdom and Innocency. 'Twas the Direction given by our Blessed Saviour when he sent forth his Disciples into an ill-natur'd World, *That they should be wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves.* Alas! 'tis impossible that a good Correspondence should be kept up in any Society without Foresight and Caution, Innocence and Integrity.

egrity. A just mixture of Wisdom and Uprightness in the Conduct of Christians, will lay a Foundation for a lasting Peace. 'Twas an excellent Character one of the * Antients gave of his Father, viz. *That he neither suffer'd the Wisdom of the Serpent to degenerate into Cunning, nor the Innocency of the Dove into Indiscretion, but made up one compleat kind of Virtue from the mixture of both together.* Christianity indulges no pious Frauds, nor will the excellent Institution of the Gospel allow men to do the least Evil, tho on pretence of procuring the greatest Good: And that Wisdom which our Blessed Saviour recommends is of a Divine Original, and in its exercises must be always agreeable to the simplicity of the Gospel. To which purpose the Apostle James speaks most directly; *The Wisdom that is from above, is first* Jam. 3. 17. *pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be treated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.* A Vein of Sincerity must run through the whole Series of a Man's Actions, else what he calls prudent Management, will appear to others no better than subtilty and Craft; and that will raise a thousand Jealousies in the Minds of People,

* Greg. Nazianzen. Orat. 19.

and prepare the way for Strife. No doubt but it's very lawful, and very necessary to act with the highest Discretion and Wisdom in all Ecclesiastical Matters; but under that pretext we must be very cautious of doing any thing that is inconsistent with downright Honesty: Let us be wise, but innocent in our Conduct, if we would promote Peace in the Churches of God.

5. In all our Conferences about Religious Matters, and those Affairs that relate to the Churches of Jesus Christ, let us use soft and inoffensive Language. Sharp and indecent Reflections may separate real Friends, but will never reconcile contending Parties. Men of Sense may be wrought upon by the Power of Reason and the Dint of Argument; but they never be rail'd out of their Prejudices, if they have unhappily imbib'd any. 'Tis vain for People to pretend that their Zeal for things Sacred warms 'em: when the Passions kindle and tumultuate, and they reproach their Brethren, 'tis certainly an unhallowed Flame. Our Zeal for Religion must be always regulated by it; and when 'tis so, it will be accompanied with the *Fruits of the Spirit*, such as Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance. Do we not profess to be the Subjects

Gal. 5. 22.

the Prince of Peace? and does not such a Profession involve in it an Obligation to imitate his bright Example, who had the most easy and charming Address, and instructed those with Meekness that opposed themselves? He did never render Railing for Railing, but contrarywise Blessing; and accordingly has enjoin'd his Followers to *bless them that curse 'em*. How much rather should those that join with us in the same Prayers and Sacraments, be treated with civil and inoffensive Language? What then shall we say of that traitor some vent on their Brethren? is it not more agreeable to the Stage than the Church? and does it not favour more of the Spirit that is from beneath, than of that which is from above? Ought it not then to be discountenanc'd and suppress'd? The use of opprobrious Language is like shooting of Arrows dipt in Poison; or, to use the Expression of the wise Man, 'tis *throwing about Firebrands, Arrows and Death*, which wound him most that throws them. I have read of a sort of Creatures, the more they sting, the less they hurt; I have thought they resemble those People that constantly make use of all Language in Religious Controversies, which always does less hurt to their Adversarys than themselves. A Flint is

fooner broke on a Pillow than on an Anvil
 so Men of the most obstinate humours are
 more easily melted by mild and soft Lan-
 guage, than by that which is bitter and
 censorious. And let us remember, *That the*
Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness
of God. It may kindle an impure Fire with-
 out Light, and you well know what kind
 of Fire that does resemble. Suppose
 the Christian I differ with is mistaken
 yet if I endeavour to expose his Error with
 a rash and intemperate Zeal, with rude
 and uncivil Language, 'Tis (as one ex-
 presses it) *as if a Man should be more*
concern'd for a misplac'd hair on another
Head, than for a fiery Ulcer in his own
Breast: For certainly my passionate Raille-
 ry is a greater fault than the Error I would
 expose.

Jude 9.

My Brethren, tho the Cause we plead
 for be very good, and the Adversaries we
 argue against extremely bad, yet we are
 oblig'd to use soft and good Language.
 The Instance we have in the Epistle of
 Jude is not improper on this occasion
Michael the Archangel, when contending with
the Devil he disputed about the Body of
Moses, durst not bring against him a railing
Accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.
 Why durst not this excellent Spirit rail
 at the Devil in his dispute with him? Some
 thin

think because the Devil would have been too hard for him at railing; but the true reason I apprehend was this, That railing would have been very unsuitable to the Character of a holy Angel, and very dishonourable to that God whose Minister he was. Now if our holy Religion will not permit us to rail even at the Devil himself; it be a misbecoming thing to revile a fallen Spirit, how criminal is it to use opprobrious and ill Language to our Brethren? Indeed the Apostle advises, that *unruly and Tit. I. 10, 13.* *ain talkers* should be *rebuk'd sharply*. Convince them powerfully; let your close reasoning lay open their faults, and speak plainly to 'em. *Rem ipsam dic, mitte malè loqui; say the thing, but use no bad Language.* If we have any value for the Churches Peace, we must in all Religious Conferences observe the decorum of good language. 'Twas a fine Character given of one of the Romans, *Nescivit quid set malè dicere: He knew not what it was to give bad Language.* I wish the Character had agreed better to the generality of Christians, and that the Apostle's Advice had been taken by them; *Give none offence I Cor. 10. 32.* *neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God.*

6. If we would preserve Union and a good Correspondence among the Churches of

of Christ, great care must be taken that we do not violate or infringe that form of Discipline constituted by our Saviour. There must be the utmost caution us'd in an orderly receiving and a regular dismissal of Members. No Church ought to give countenance to those who have causelessly and schismatically rent themselves from an orderly Church of Jesus Christ, or that have been righteously excluded the Communion for Heresy or Immorality. For that Church that will venture to receive Persons under a just Censure, does not only inroach on the Privilege of another Church, but in so acting usurps a Supremacy over it. 'Tis too notorious to be conceal'd how great Confusion has been made in the Christian World by the Arrogancy of the Bishop of *Rome*, and by the Church of *Rome*'s pretending to be the only true Church in the World. How little ground she has for this claim I need not say, when so many of the Characters of a false Church exactly agree to her. As an assuming Spirit has a tendency to Strife where it appears in single Persons, so it manifestly leads to Diffension where a Community of Members are under its influence. Therefore if we would have Peace flourish in the Churches, let not one Church pretend to an Authority over another, but let every truly constituted Church

Church of Jesus Christ enjoy her freedom
in Ecclesiastical Administrations, according
to the Order Christ has establish'd in his
House.

7. Let us send up our united Cries to
Heaven for the Spirit of Love, and of a
sound Mind. God has all Hearts in his
Hands, and can turn them as the Rivers of
Water. How suddenly did he cure the
Disorders of *Esau's* Spirit, and of an Ene-
my made him a Friend! Our God is a
God of Peace, and 'tis only He that can
create Peace, and make Jerusalem a quiet Ha-
bitation. Let us therefore, with the Psal-
mist, *pray for the Peace of Jerusalem.* With
what fervour did the Apostle pray for the
Thessalonians on this very account! *The Lord* ^{2 Thess. 3.}
of Peace give you Peace always by all means. ^{16.}
Now to encourage our earnest Addresses, God
has promis'd, *That he will turn to his People a
pure Language, that they may all call upon the
Name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent.*
He has also assur'd us, that he will give his ^{Jer. 32. 39.}
People one Heart, and one Way. Now such
Promises we should plead with him in
Prayer. When the Israelites attempted to
engage God on their side, they agreed to-
gether as one Man to ask his Counsel;
Then all the Children of Israel went out, and ^{Judg. 20.}
the Congregation was gathered together as one ^{1.}
*Man, from Dan even to Beersheba, with the
Land*

Land of Gilead, unto the Lord in Mizpe
 I would hope that all those that are assembled here on this solemn Occasion, are in the same disposition of mind; and that our united Crys put up to the Father of Mercys by the hands of a Mediator, will obtain for us all necessary and agreeable Supplies. I doubt not but you are sensible that the Success of our Endeavours for the good of the Churches depends on God Almighty. Whatever Methods we fall upon will be ineffectual, unless He prosper and succeed 'em. The Cure of the Divisions that may arise in any Church, can be only by the God of Peace; let us therefore pray, *That Ephraim may not envy Judah nor Judah vex Ephraim*: and as many as join with us in such Petitions, *Peace be on them, and Mercy on the Israel of God.*

I proceed now to the *last* general Head which is to improve the whole.

First, Let us labour to be thorowly sensible wherein we have been defective in the discharge of that great Duty that has been recommended to us. Let us mourn over our own Defects, and the Churches Divisions. You have heard how reasonable the Duty of following the things that make for Peace, is in it self, and what great Obligations we are under to comply with it.

Surely

surely the sense of having been deficient
 herein should strike us with a due Con-
 cern, we should lay our mouths in the Dust,
 so be there may be hope, that the Chur-
 ches Peace may be yet as a River, and her
 Righteousness as the Waves of the Sea.
 There is too much cause to fear that we
 have not all of us done our utmost to pro-
 duce and perpetuate the Peace of the Chur-
 ches: Have not the strong scandalized the
 weak, and the weak been too free in cen-
 suring the strong? whereas the Apostle says,
*if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live
 peaceably with all men.* Now have we not
 neglected what we might possibly have
 done? Therefore let us lay our hands upon
 our Hearts, and with shame and pungent
 sorrow acknowledg our Guilt in the above-
 mention'd respect. The Apostle tells us,
*where envying and strife is, there is confu-
 sion, and every evil work:* than which no-
 thing can do more hurt to Christianity, or
 more hinder its progress. Therefore Julian
 the Apostate, who treated the Christian
 constitution with the greatest spite, thought
 he could not take a more effectual way to
 hinder the spreading of the Gospel, than by
 keeping up the Divisions in that time be-
 twixt the Catholicks and Donatists. The
 Gospel might have a freer course, were it
 not for the divisions that are among Chri-
 stians.

stians. Let us be sensible of our folly, and above all things let us put on Charity; for a weak Christian by the exercise of that Grace, shall more remarkably adorn the Doctrine of God his Saviour, than a Person of greater knowledge who has not so much Charity.

Secondly, Let both Ministers and People follow the things that make for Peace and those things whereby we may edify one another. Tho Peace should flee from us, yet we should follow it with the greatest vigor. *διώκωμεν*, the word used in the Text, signifies to pursue a thing eagerly as Hunters do their Prey. Therefore that this Exhortation may be successful, I shall submit to your serious Thoughts the following things.

1. Consider, that unless a Man be of peaceable and charitable temper, the highest profession of Religion is insignificant and vain. Let a Man make never such pretences concerning his close adherence to the Dutys of the first Table, if he does not perform those of the Second, he's no better than a hypocritical Pretender. That Man has no true love to God whose Heart is void of Charity to his Brother. And so much is concluded in the Apostles Argument; *If a man say, I love God, and hate his Brother, he is a Lier. For he that*

1 John 4.
20.

loves

knoweth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? The same Apostle instances in Brotherly Love, as the true mark of a Christian. *We know* (says he) *that we are passed from Death to Life, because we love the Brethren.* How high soever some rise in the Profession of Religion, yet if they are Strangers to the Exercises of Charity, their Religion is vain. *tho I speak* (says the Apostle) *with the Tongues of Men and Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as a sounding Brass, or tinkling Cymbal.* And *tho I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge; and tho I have all Faith, that I could remove Mountains, and have Charity, I am nothing.* And *tho I bestow my Goods to feed the Poor, and tho I give my Body to be burn'd, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

1 John 3.
14.

1 Cor. 13.
1, 2, 3.

2. Consider that a charitable and peaceable Temper carries with it its own Reward, as I have hinted under a former Head. Love is the most easy Passion, and affords the greatest Pleasure; whereas Wrath and Rivalry, Animosity and Discord, Envy and Revenge, are the Works of the Flesh, and a Punishment to those that indulge in them. Malicious and revengeful Men are like the troubled Sea that cannot rest, but perpetually casts up mire and dirt.

But the man that is of a charitable disposition, and follows the things that make for Peace, is encompass'd with thousand advantages, being expressly brought within the compass of one of the Beatitudes. *Blessed are the Peacemakers; for they shall be call'd the Children of God.* In a word, if it be possible for any Man to have a taste of the Pleasures of Paradise in this wast and howling Wilderness, must be that Person who loves his Brethren with a pure Heart fervently; for such a one dwelleth in Love, and he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him; for God is Love.

Mat. 5.

1 John 4. 16.

3. Consider that our blessed Lord but a little before his Death pray'd for that which I am now pressing upon you, namely, Union and Concord. *Holy Father, keep through thine own Name them whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are one.* Our Blessed Saviour was not so solicitous that his People might be kept from the Persecutions of their Enemies, as that there might be a firm Union and good Correspondence amongst themselves, well knowing how much that would contribute to their establishment and growth. Our Lord in these Discourses does compare his People to Creatures of the most innocent and

Joh. 17. 11.

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offensive Nature, such as Doves, Lambs, and Sheep; and sometimes he compares them to little Children that have no confirm'd Prejudices against any, to signify to be sure that such as claim any alliance with him should be the Sons of Peace. Now certainly what our Saviour pray'd for, as he were with his dying breath, for the Disciples of his Cross, should be endeavour'd after by all that pretend to submit to his scepter; especially considering 'twas one end of his Death: *And having made Peace through the Blood of his Cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in Earth, or things in Heaven.* Col. 1 20.

4. Let the Consideration of the Union that there is amongst evil Spirits, and in a false Church, be a means to provoke us to follow the things that make for Peace, who profess to adhere to the Reform'd Churches. There is a kind of Union and Confederacy in the Kingdom of Darkness: The fallen Angels unite their joint endeavours to break the Peace of the Church, and so can wicked Men. *Gabal and Ammon, Amalek, and the Men of Tyre did all conspire against Israel.* Psal. 83. 12.

They can agree in Mischief, tho they hate one another; their Confederacy (as one observes) is like *Sampson's* Foxes, tho

tho their Faces look'd several ways, being ty'd tail to tail, yet they could run together and set the Corn on fire. And 'tis very remarkable, that *Herod* and *Pilate*, tho a great variance, could be Friends at a day's warning, when Christ was to be crucify'd.

'Tis notoriously evident, that there are wide Differences in the Church of Rome. How great Controversies have there been between the *Jansenists* and the *Jesuits*, the *Franciscans* and the *Dominicans*? with what warmth has one of these Parties contended for the immaculate Conception of the Virgin *Mary*, which the other, tho of the same Communion, has as hotly oppos'd. How great Disputes also have there been betwixt the *Gallican* Church, and those that are more enslav'd to the Bishop of Rome in *Italy* and *Spain*? I might also mention the Secular and Regular Priests, whose Differences have not been small; yet all these contending Parties can as one Man agree to carry on their common Interest, and unite in their Subjection to Antichrist their common Head. * *It's lawful to learn from an Enemy.* May our Enemies provoke us to Charity, and quicken us in the pursuit of those things that make for Peace.

* ——— Fas est & ab Hoste doceri.

5. Consider it will not be long, and all those things that try our Patience and disorder our Passions, will end. This is the Apostle's Motive: *Let your Moderation be known to all men, for the Lord is at hand.* Phil. 4. 5.

Would any of you be found by Christ under the height of Disorder and Passion, contending and quarrelling with your Brethren? Or would you not rather be found of Christ in Peace; not only in a state of Reconciliation with God, but in Charity with one another? 'Tis but a little time that we can be serviceable to each other; therefore whatsoever our hand findeth to do, that may be for God's Glory and the Peace of the Churches, let us do with all our Might, for there is no Work, nor Device, nor Knowledge in the grave.

We have Work of the highest importance on our hands, let us not waste the little time we have to do it in. 'Twas a cutting Reproof which the Mariners gave the Philosopher, who would have entered them with an impertinent Harangue in the midst of a Storm, *We perish*, say they, *Wilt thou triflest*. All our warm Disputes about indifferent things, are but industrious trifling.

Let us therefore mind the one thing necessary, and work the Works of him that sent

sent us, while it's call'd to day, because the Night is hastning wherein no man can work.

Lastly, Let us often think of the glorious and blessed Place whither we all profess to be going; I mean Heaven: where there is not one Person that sighs, weeps, or complains. Above there are no Hurries and Confusions, no Piques or Animosities but Peace and Joy in their utmost perfection. Clouds and Tempests are formed in the lower Region of the Air; all above is calm and serene. Here the Church militant within it self, but hereafter shall triumph in an everlasting Peace. Let us have our Conversation in Heaven, that we may more resemble the Temper of the Blessed while we are upon Earth. *No the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work, to do his Will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ; To whom be Glory and Dominion: And let all the Churches say Amen.*



FINIS.